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New advancements in stem cell research promise relief to millions, but lack congressional authorization

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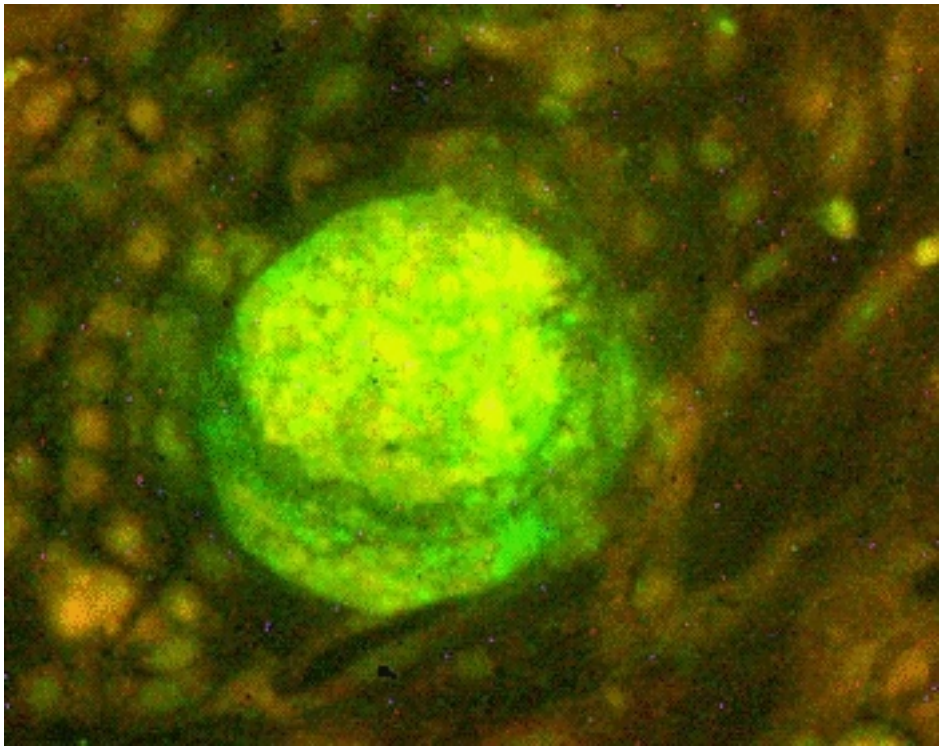
Kirk: "The potential of stem cell research is limitless, but only if the federal government continues to support innovations in medicine."

CHICAGO – U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) College of Medicine researchers and patient advocacy organizations today highlighted current advancements in stem cell research and discussed efforts to protect federal funding that has the potential to create new treatments and cures for millions of Americans suffering from debilitating injuries and chronic diseases.

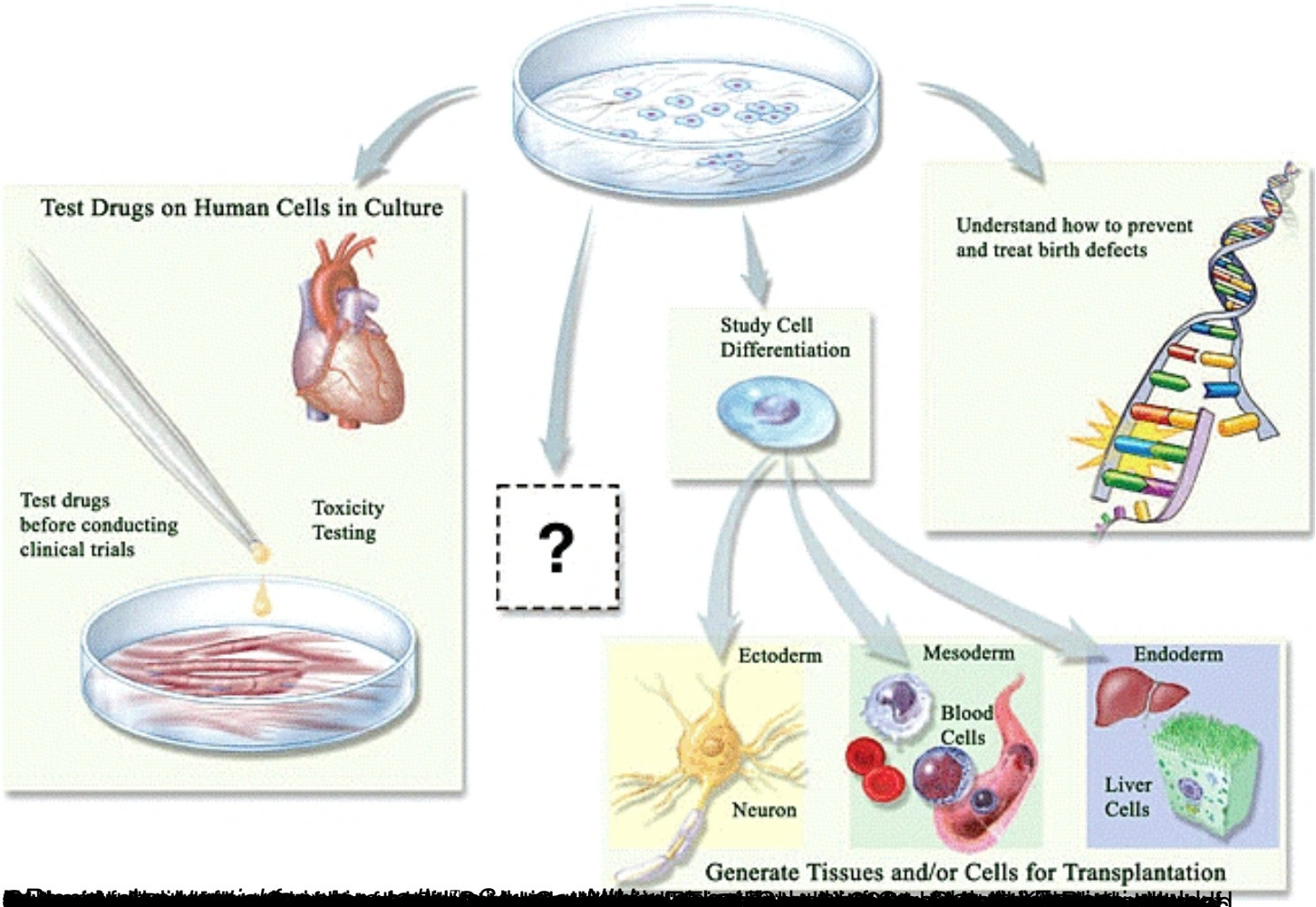
"Two years ago, my father died of Pulmonary Fibrosis, a disease that slowly suffocates its victims as lung tissue hardens," Kirk told researchers and other guests. "He, like thousands of others, had no treatment available. For the countless families who have lost a loved one to an incurable disease, nothing is more devastating. But there is hope. The potential of stem cell research is limitless, but only if the federal government continues to support innovation in medicine. With his Executive Order last year, President Obama authorized access to more stem cell lines, which could unlock the cure to spinal cord injuries, diabetes, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and cancer, among many other diseases. We need to ensure future administrations do not remove access to these vital lines. That is why Congress should pass the Stem Cell Research Advancement Act (H.R. 4808) and guarantee researchers the access they need to develop new medical breakthroughs."

Joining Congressman Kirk were researchers at the UIC College of Medicine's Pharmacology Department, including Assistant Professor Dr. Kishore Wary and Instructor Sophie Toya. Attending patient advocacy groups included 9-year-old Jared Kuper, the 2010 Youth Ambassador for the American Diabetes Association, Leanne Storch, the Executive Director of the Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation and representatives from the National Spinal Cord Injury Association and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Pluripotent stem cells have the ability to develop into nearly any cell in the human body, providing real hope for millions of Americans suffering from a wide range of diseases, including diabetes, cancer, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's and spinal cord injuries. There are one million people in the U.S. with Parkinson's, three million with Type 1 diabetes, 200,000 with spinal cord injuries and 128,000 with pulmonary fibrosis.



A colony of stem cells. Source: International Society for Stem Cell Research


Test Drugs on Human Cells in Culture
Test drugs
before conducting
clinical trials
Toxicity
Testing
?
Study Cell
Differentiation
Understand how to prevent
and treat birth defects
Ectoderm
Neuron
Mesoderm
Blood
Cells
Endoderm
Liver
Cells
Generate Tissues and/or Cells for Transplantation

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